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Senior Health and Wellness Newsletter

Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living



Fruits and Vegetables are in Season. Let's Keep Them Safe.

The number of illnesses as a result of consuming unsafe fruit and vegetables has increased in recent years. Bacteria, viruses, and tiny parasites are everywhere in our environment and can reach our foods causing us to become sick. Older adults are at greater risk of becoming sick from food borne illnesses. There are steps we can take to protect ourselves while continuing to enjoy fruits and vegetables.



Check what you buy.

- Buy only fruits and vegetables that have no bruises or damage.
- Buy packaged items such as salads and precut fruit only if it has been refrigerated or in ice at the store.

Clean them properly.

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap before handling fruits and vegetables.
- Clean all kitchen surfaces, utensils, and cutting boards with hot soapy water.
- Rinse all fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water including those you plan to peel. If you buy prepackaged items that are marked "washed and ready to eat" there is no need to wash them.

- Scrub firm skin fruits and vegetables under running water with a clean produce brush.
- Dry fruits and vegetables with a clean cloth.

Note: Never use detergent or bleach to wash fruits and vegetables. These products are not intended for consumption.

Keep them separate.

- While shopping, keep fruits and vegetables separate from chemicals and raw foods such as meats both in the cart and during bagging.
- Use separate cutting boards or clean

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the cutting board with hot soapy water between cutting meats and fruits and vegetables.

- Cook or throw away fruits and vegetables that have touched raw meats or their juices.

Chill them promptly.

- Refrigerate all cut, peeled or cooked fresh fruits and vegetables within two hours.
- Many fruits and vegetables can be better maintained in the fridge. If you are unsure, ask the grocer.
- Set your fridge at 40 degrees F or less. Use a thermometer to check.

Throw them away.

- Throw them out if they have not been refrigerated properly.
- Throw away bruised or damaged fruits and vegetables.

Note: Older Adults and persons with weakened immune systems should avoid eating raw or lightly cooked sprouts of any kind.

When in doubt, throw it out!

For more information:

- Partnership for Food Safety Education—<http://www.fightbac.org/>
- FDA Information and Video—<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm114299>
- USDA Food Safety Education—http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Be_FoodSafe/

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